



To the Honorable Kathleen McDonald O'Malley

In regards to Evan Stern
From Rebecca Stern (Sister)
January 4, 2008

Dear Judge O'Malley,

To say that my brother has changed over the past several years is an understatement. Quite simply, he is not the same person today as he was three years ago.

In many ways, I am more like Evan than any other member of my family. Our senses of humor and intellectual interests have often been in lockstep, and, as any younger sibling does, I looked up to my older brother immensely as I was growing up. However, as similar as we may have been, my relationship with Evan was always a step away from close. He was reclusive and often short-tempered, and was, frankly, irresponsible and somewhat uncaring. As we grew older, the distance he placed between himself and others only became more pronounced. By the time I entered high school – when Evan was eighteen – he was more of a housemate than a sibling. Moreover, when he did break with his normal self-imposed isolation, it more often than not was by entering into a confrontation. My memories of Evan throughout my last four years at home (including when he moved out to go to college) are of an angry, very unhappy young man who had difficulty building or keeping a good interpersonal relationship. Although I loved my brother very much, by the time I left for college I had grown used to the idea that I would only speak to him rarely, see him even less often, and would always be kept at arm's length.

This changed suddenly during one of my first visits home from school. Evan had moved back into my parents' house, but I did not yet know why (he had wanted to tell me himself, face-to-face). That conversation with my brother was what marked, in my mind, the massive change that he was implementing in his own life (and brought to light the underlying issues behind many of his past problems). He sat me down, looked me in the eye, and told me that he had done something for which he was incredibly ashamed. He described the police coming to his apartment to confiscate his computer, his subsequent conversations with my parents and his then-fiancée, and what was going to happen now (as far as he could discern). During the entire discussion, what struck me most was the fact that Evan was completely, transparently honest. Never once did he make excuses for himself or try to hide the truth – he told me exactly what had been on his hard drive, how long it had been a problem, and that he clearly needed help. He said that there was a good chance that he would be going to jail – moreover, he felt that he deserved to go to jail for what he'd done. In fact, the point that he kept returning to was that he was, in a very real way, glad that he had been caught. "I needed to stop; it was ruining my life, but I didn't know how to fix it," was what he told me.

Since that day, I have watched Evan undergo a complete transformation. By the time I was told what was happening, he had already entered into an intensive therapy program and was focusing entirely on fixing himself. Over the past two years, he has graduated from college (something I was not sure he was ever going to do), obtained a good job, and built a self-sufficient, healthy life for himself. As to my relationship with Evan: he has become a responsible, caring older brother. Before I left for college, I would speak to him about once a month, and never about anything of consequence. Now, he calls me every few days to tell me he loves me, say how his life is going, and to see how I am doing. And, for a person who used to have trouble taking care of his own life, he has become an amazingly good support system for myself and other members of my family. He is now the first person I call when I have a problem, and in two years he has not once failed to give me all of his attention and encouragement whenever I needed it.

Evan is not perfect, and he knows it. However, I truly believe that he has done everything in his power to make himself a better man, and to ensure that he will never again be the person he once was. For my brother, the biggest step was acknowledging the problem and confronting it – once he had done this, it became something that he could remove from his life. Had he had charges pressed against him two years ago, going to prison may have been an effective way for Evan to reform; however, he has since worked so hard to change himself (even without the threat of legal penalties) that it is difficult to see what the benefit of a jail sentence could be. Sending Evan to prison would be removing him as a

productive member of society and an integral part of my family, and I do not believe that the corrections system can do anything to make him a safer, better citizen that he has not already done himself. I do not harbor any fears that Evan will be a repeat offender; he is no longer the sort of person who would allow himself to go down that road. I truly think that leniency in my brother's case is merited, and that – if he is allowed to continue building his life and working on himself – he will flourish.

Sincerely,

REBECCA STERN 1/4/08

Rebecca Stern